

My name is Denise Pollicella and I represent the Michigan Cannabis Development Association, an organization formed by experienced and knowledgeable business owners with expertise in the medical marihuana field that was formed for the promotion and protection of the Michigan medical marihuana industry.

The MCDA acknowledges and appreciates the tireless effort and unwavering dedication of Representative Callton and his staff over the past several years in forwarding a safe access system that, when he began, saw little support from this legislative body. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Representative Callton for his commitment to the medical marihuana community.

HB 4209 is on the right track. The only way to ensure safe access to safe medical cannabis is through a licensed retail facility. The MCDA would merely expound on the foundation created by HB 4209 by providing detailed focus on the complementary businesses necessarily created by provisioning centers – namely the cultivators, infused-product manufacturers, testing labs and distributors – and more thoroughly define the standards by, and structure within, which these different components must operate. Simply put, the MCDA wishes for clear and comprehensive rules set forth by this legislative body that will leave little room for the ambiguity and court challenges that have plagued the medical marihuana community for the past six and a half years.

A clear and comprehensive set of rules will, in our opinion, allow the law enforcement community to concentrate their efforts on the truly criminal element that refuses to operate within the law, allow the people and businesses directly involved with providing medical marihuana to Michigan's patient community to do so without fear of prosecution and catastrophic loss, and provide the State of Michigan, its citizens, and its communities with the assurances that the businesses operating in their communities are doing so with the full support of their state and local governments. And with the revenue that this licensed industry can create for the state, we may even fill a few potholes.

The MCDA wishes to make its goals and mission very clear. We are Michigan-based. All of our directors are lifelong Michigan residents and small business owners. Our advocacy is for the success of Michigan small businesses and Michigan local economies, and we are passionately, single-mindedly dedicated to working toward a comprehensive system that gets safe medical marihuana to the Michigan patients who require it, and keeps the revenue from that industry in Michigan.



## Michigan legislature has opportunity to make medical marijuana safe for patients

*By Terrence Mansour*

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Michigan's Legislature has an opportunity to finally establish a framework for safely, securely and responsibly ensuring that patients get access to medical marijuana.

By taking action now, the Legislature will help fix a 7-year-old problem that has denied patients the care they need and the relief they deserve.

In 2008, nearly two out of every three Michigan voters supported a ballot proposal allowing patients to get access to medical marijuana with a doctor's recommendation.

Since 2008, Michigan's voter-approved law has been mired in confusion. Different communities have adopted different rules. The basic infrastructure of the law was undermined by court rulings. Patients had few options for places to get their medicines. Non-smokable forms of marijuana, like oils, remain illegal. Children who could get relief from medical marijuana are especially burdened.

Clarity and certainty are long overdue for the Michigan patients who have struggled for years to get the medicine that can improve their health and quality of life.

As the [Legislature jumpstarts this important debate](#), here are five critical concepts to ensure patients get safe products, bad actors are kept out of this fledgling industry and medical marijuana doesn't wind up in the wrong hands.

- Medical marijuana should be available only to patients with a doctor's recommendation. We must pass tough laws so kids don't get their hands on marijuana for illegal recreational use. With tough standards, a strong regulatory framework and clear guidelines so the private sector can operate with certainty, we can prevent shady businesses and criminal elements from endangering patients and the public.



- Strong accountability is critical to ensuring patient and product safety is a top priority. Accountability and transparency can foster product safety and rigorous product testing. The end result: safer products for tens of thousands of patients suffering from cancer, Parkinson's, Crohn's, glaucoma and other painful, debilitating diseases.
- Common-sense step-by-step safeguards should be implemented. These include background checks for those working in the medical marijuana industry; licensing of facilities and training for those in the industry; regular inspections by law enforcement and regulators; and cash-only transactions to prevent an individual or business from exerting undue influence that could ultimately endanger patients and the public.
- Businesses involved in different phases of medical marijuana should be separated into distinct "tiers." These tiers are producers or growers, testing facilities, distribution businesses, and retailers or sellers. Michigan is already home to other successful industries that have independent, separate tiers and we should emulate their successes and best practices.
- Tracking products at every stage can boost patient and product safety. Medical marijuana products should be tracked from the production phase to testing to distribution to sales.

These concepts provide a responsible blueprint for how Michigan can build a medical marijuana industry safely and responsibly. In addition to providing patients' relief, a responsible medical marijuana framework can also promote business development, encourage local job growth and generate tens of millions in tax revenues for our state that can support many services, from roads to schools. A clear set of rules can drive real competition and innovation, and help all businesses in the sector compete.

Recently introduced legislation represents an important first step in this discussion. Sen. Rick Jones and **state Reps. Mike Callton** and Klint Kesto are spearheading some important proposals and deserve to be recognized for their leadership. The entire Legislature should end years of delay and confusion, and take action so patients can get their medicine in a safe, secure and responsible way.

***Terrence Mansour is president of the Michigan Cannabis Development Association based in Detroit.***

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